A DISCOURSE OF TEMPTING CHRIST.

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A

DISCOURSE

OF

TEMPTING CHRIST.

To the READER.

I Shall not need to urge the Uſefulneſs of aſſerting the Divinity of our Bleſſed Saviour, from every Scripture-Medium, that will prove, or illuſtrate it, to argue the firſt part of this Diſcourſe to be ſeaſonable, ſo far as this Text may be improv'd to confirm it. And the many ways of Tempting God (particularly with reſpect to his Providence*) which are afterwards mention'd, may help the Conviction and Recovery of ſome who are guilty, and prevent the Sin of others in the like kind.*

What I preach'd on this Subject, (at a Time when many in this City needed it) againſt laying great Wagers upon the future Determinations of Divine Providence, (as to the Succeſs of Fleets and Armies abroad, *&c.*) *offended ſome who had*

been drawn into the Snare, and it may be got Money by it; while others, having ſmarted for their Raſhneſs and Preſumption, thank'd me for the Warning, and promiſed to take it, wiſhing they had done it ſooner.

To the Inſtances of Tempting God, as to his Power *and* Providence, *may be added the falſe and lying Wonders, which the Jews were addicted to. Their Rabbins, and their* Talmud *mention ſtrange Stories of this kind. They had frequent* Exorciſms *by Invocation of the God of* Jacob. *They had* Amulets, *and* Ligatures, *and confident Aſſertions, that God gave Power to his Law, his Name, and Attributes, when thus* * *applied by them, to heal Diſeaſes, and work Signs and Wonders, becauſe their Law was of Divine Original.*

A Deſcription of a Charmer (Chober) *among the Jews is thus given by* † Maimonides. "*He is a* "*Charmer who ſpeaks words of a*

"*ſtrange*

* *Lightfoot* Hor. Heb. in Mat. 24. Vol. 2. p. 243.
† *Maimonides* de Idolat. c. 11. §. 10, 12.

" *ſtrange Language, and without*
" *Senſe, and in Fooliſhneſs thinks*
" *that theſe words are profitable:*
" *That if one ſay ſo or ſo to a Ser-*
" *pent or a Scorpion, it cannot hurt*
" *a Man; and he that ſaith ſo or ſo*
" *unto a Man, he cannot be hurt,* &c.
" *He that whiſpereth over a Wound,*
" *or readeth a Verſe out of the Bible;*
" *likewiſe he that readeth over an In-*
" *fant, that it may not be frighted,*
" *or that lays the Book of the Law, or*
" *the Philacteries upon a Child that*
" *it may ſleep; ſuch are not only a-*
" *mong Enchanters or Charmers, but*
" *of thoſe that generally deny the*
" *Law of God, becauſe they make the*
" *words of the Scripture, Medicine*
" *for the* Body, *whereas they are not,*
" *but for the* Soul, *as it is written,*
" Prov. 3. 22. They ſhall be Life
" unto thy Soul.

Many ſtrange and undoubted Inſtances may be given of Evil Spirits exorciſed and diſpoſſeſt, by the Invocation of the God of Abraham, Iſaac,

and Jacob, *even by* Pagans, *as well as by* Jews; *or by* Chriſtians *mentioning the Name of* Jeſus Chriſt: *that many who did not own the Faith, either of* Jews *or* Chriſtians, *yet atteſted upon their own Experience* * *the Virtue of thoſe Names. It would yet be a Tempting of God, for us to uſe thoſe Names, and expect the like Succeſs, becauſe without a Warrant.*

As to what is ſaid of Tempting Providence, *by uſing unlawful or ſuſpected Methods to accompliſh our Deſires, and by raſh Appeals to Heaven to decide in doubtful Caſes,* &c. *I might add* † *many more Examples, particularly concerning* Waters of Probation: " || *Waters which had Virtue* " *to diſcover and chaſtiſe the Sinner,* " *whilſt*

* See many Authors cited by Dr. *Whitby*, in his Excellent Diſcourſe *of the Certainty of the Chriſtian Faith in general*, &c. 8°. 1671. Annot. on Ch. 1. §. 3.

† P. Molinæi *Vates*, lib. 3. c. 21, 22, 23. de Judicio per ſingulare Certamen, quæ vulgaris Purgatio in Jure Canonico appellatur. De Purgatione per Aquam ferventem, aut prunas, aut ferrum candens, & per Aquam frigidam, *&c.*

|| Dr. *Whitby*, Ib. chap. 1. §. 5.

" *whilſt they cleared the Innocent*; *as*
" *Heathen Writers affirm of* Olachas,
" *and other Rivers, which were wont*
" *to put off their Natures, and be-*
" *come Fire to the guilty Perſon*;
" *of the* Crateres Palichorum, *and*
" *the Sardinian Fountains, which did*
" *ſtrike the Thief, or perjured Per-*
" *ſon, blind or dead*; *of the Indian*
" Brachmans *probatory Waters, and*
" *many others of that kind. And as*
" *the Jews ſay, with much better*
" *ground, of thoſe of* Jealouſy, *which*
" *being uſed according to the Preſcri-*
" *ption of their Law, to try the*
" *Chaſtity of any Woman, of whom*
" *her Husband ſhould be jealous, did*
" *cauſe the guilty Thigh to rot, and*
" *had no like Effect upon the Inno-*
" *cent*; *I ſay with* better ground,
" *for had they failed upon Trial, the*
" *Jews could not have own'd that Law*
" *for Sacred, which left them ſuch*
" *a ſtanding Lie. But for us to ex-*
pect God's Deciſion of Right and Wrong, of Innocence or Guilt, by ſuch

like

like Methods, would be to Tempt him.

I ſhall only add a Paſſage out of a late * *Author to the purpoſe of* the tenth Section. " *What ſhall I ſay* " *of our common Croſſes and Charms?* " *The Devil fights with us like* a Par- " thian *flying; pretends himſelf to be* " *vanquiſh'd by us, that he may the* " *better conquer us, through Superſti-* " *tion, by his Flight? So what ſhall I* " *ſay to your other ſet Forms of Words,* " *the* Sieve *and* Sheers, *and ſuch o-* " *ther Trifles and Gewgaws? If Words* " *do any thing really, it muſt be through* " *Faith; and if Faith be once ſo* " *powerful, it can eaſily effect without* " *a ſet Form like Conjuring; but if* " *Words prove powerful without* " *Faith,* latet Anguis in Herba, *we* " *have all the reaſon in the World to* " *apprehend ſome Deluſion from our* " *common Enemy the Devil.*

There

* Mr. *Freke's* ſelect Eſſays, 8°. of *Divination* and *Aſtrology*, p. 23, 24.

There is one thing, which may be reducible to this Head of Tempting Christ, *which may be objected against ſome Paſſages in a little Book I lately printed,* viz. Some Account of the Holy Life and Death of Mr. *Gearing*, &c. *that they may encourage People, under Trouble of Mind, to expect, that by opening the Bible, the firſt place they look into, ſhould by Divine Direction be ſuitable for their Support and Relief; or it may add to their Affliction and Melancholy, if they do not ſucceed in ſuch an Attempt, as others have done. 'Tis true, I there relate only Matter of Fact, as I found it written, without intimating that I approve or diſapprove of ſuch a Practice. But leſt any ſhould take occaſion to expect the like, and be troubled if they do not; I muſt freely acknowledg, that I know of no ground we have, in that way to look for preſent ſuitable Counſel, or Conſolation. The Holy Spirit is not limited, and may ſometimes direct, and guide an humble doubting Chriſtian.*

But

But 'tis more advisable to consider, and enquire what Promises and Examples of Holy Scripture, are most adapted to your Case, and proper for your Support.

To open the Book, and expect that the first Chapter, and Verse you cast your Eyes on, should just answer your Case, and administer Resolution or Comfort, is without sufficient Ground or Warrant, and is a kind of limiting God, *and so a* Tempting *of him. For what reason hath any Man to believe, that God will certainly discover, and reveal himself that way, to satisfy his Doubts?*

May a Divine Blessing accompany this serious Admonition and Warning, to take heed how we Tempt God, by any of the various Methods here explain'd.

London, *March* the 8th, 169⅔. J. S.

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A Discourse of Tempting Christ.

1 COR. x. 9.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also Tempted, and were destroyed of Serpents.

Sect. I.

The Introduction, Context, and proposed Method of the following Discourse.

WE experience the mighty Force of *Example*, to draw or to dissuade; when bare Counsel will not move, and naked Precept makes little Im-

preſſion. It is eaſier to oppoſe and contradict the moſt poſitive Rule, to deſpiſe and make light of the plaineſt Prohibition, and Caution againſt Sin, than when we ſee the Evil of it as in a Glaſs, by ſome remarkable Inſtance of Divine Severity. On this Account the Hiſtorical Part of the Holy Scriptures is of excellent Uſe; and accordingly the Examples of God's Antient People the Jews, are frequently referr'd to in the New Teſtament. They are ſaid to be *Types*, and *Patterns* unto us, to inſtruct us what we may expect, if we imitate their Tranſgreſſions, by the Righteous Judgments of God, that followed them.

A GOOD part of this Chapter is imployed by the Apoſtle, in admoniſhing and warning theſe *Corinthians* againſt ſeveral particular Sins, from the Conſideration of the Puniſhments which God inflicted upon the *Iſraelites* for the like. Tho they were his peculiar People, he would-

would not ſpare them, but did rather execute Vengeance with the greater Severity and Speed. They enjoyed many Advantages above the reſt of the World; eſpecially as *to them belonged the Covenant, and the Adoption:* On which Account they are called *their Fathers*, ver. 1. which the *Jews* could not otherwiſe be to theſe *Corinthians*, who were Heathens, and ſome of the Firſt-fruits of the Gentile Church. *Types*, and *Examples unto us*, ver. 6. to warn us againſt ſuch and ſuch particular Sins, from what they ſuffered in the Wilderneſs for the like. Adding, that *theſe things are written for our ſakes*, ver. 11. *on whom the Ends of the World are come.* That is, on our account, who live in the latter Ages of the World; when thoſe latter Days are begun, in which the great Change, foretold by the Prophets to be made by the Meſſiah's Kingdom, doth take place; which Kingdom is to laſt, and increaſe to

the end of the World, without the expectation of any other conſiderable Change of that Nature. It is for our ſakes, on whom the Ends of the World are come, that theſe things are written. That thereby we may know and be convinced, that, whatever the Difference may be imagined between *Chriſtians* and *Jews*, between *Moſes* and *Chriſt*, between *the Law* and *the Goſpel*, between the *Typical Egypt*, *Wilderneſs*, and *Canaan* of the *Jews*, and the *Antitype* to theſe things amongſt us *Chriſtians*; whatever the Difference may be between us and them, and whatever Advantages may lie on our ſide; yet if we will not take warning by *their Example*, we muſt expect the like Severity of Divine Juſtice, as they experienced.

AMONG other Provocations, of which the Jews were guilty, and which the Apoſtle takes notice of in this Chapter, *This* in theſe words deſerves to be conſidered;

Neither

Neither let us tempt Chriſt, as ſome of them alſo tempted, &c.

1. I SHALL conſider *the Example of the Antient Jews*, and what *Sin* that was which is here referred to, and *the Puniſhment* of it. 2. How *We* may be ſaid to *tempt Chriſt*; what is the Nature of *that Sin*, or how many ways we may be guilty of it. 3. Cloſe with a Practical Exhortation, to impreſs and improve the whole.

SECT. II.

Of the Perſon tempted, and ſinn'd againſt by the Jews, Jeſus Chriſt. *His Exiſtence before his Incarnation prov'd againſt the* Socinians.

I. LET us conſider this Example of *the Jews.* We are cautioned not to tempt Chriſt,

as They alſo tempted him. Before I ſpeak to the Nature of their Sin, and the Puniſhment of it, whereof we have a more particular account, *Numb.* 21. it will be neceſſary to enquire *who is the Perſon offended*, how *the Jews* in the *Wilderneſs* can be ſaid to have tempted *Chriſt* ſo long before his Incarnation; which is the Apoſtle's Charge here, and the Ground of his Admonition to us, not to incur the like Guilt.

THE Socinians, and others who diſown the *Divinity* of our *Bleſſed Saviour*, are here perplexed, to evade the force of the Argument for the Exiſtence of *Jeſus Chriſt*, before he was born of the *Virgin Mary*: For the Scripture ſpeaks frequently concerning the Jews as *tempting Jehovah*, and of their being puniſhed for it in the Wilderneſs; and it is plain that this Paſſage refers unto that time, by the mention of their *being deſtroyed by Serpents.* Now it was for *tempting*

of

of Chriſt, ſays the Apoſtle, that they were ſo deſtroyed: Therefore Chriſt is *Jehovah*, the true God, and did exiſt before his Incarnation.

THERE are *three* things they pretend, whereby to weaken the Force of this Argument. 1. Some of them will have it to be *a Created Angel* who led the Jews in the Wilderneſs, and whom they tempted, and ſinned againſt. Others ſay that *Moſes* is to be underſtood by the word *Chriſt*, and that their Sin was in tempting him. A third ſort find fault with *our Tranſlation*, and that this Verſe ought to be read, either thus, Neither tempt ye *God*, as they tempted *him*; or thus, Neither tempt ye *Chriſt*, as they tempted *God*.

I. AS to the firſt Evaſion, concerning *a Created Angel*: Not only is there no ſuch Charge againſt them in the Hiſtory, as *tempting*

of an Angel; nor is *an Angel* any where ſaid *to be tempted* by the Jews. But the Angel of the Covenant who conducted them in the Wilderneſs, is ſaid to be *Jehovah*, who led them by a Pillar of Cloud by Day, and of Fire by Night, *Exod.* 13. 21. compared with *Chap.* 23. *ver.* 21. where he is called *an Angel.* But what is ſaid of him will by no means agree to a created Angel. *Behold I ſend an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, obey his Voice, provoke him not: for he will not pardon your Tranſgreſſions*, &c.

II. WITH as little reaſon is *Moſes* pretended by *Socinus* to be here meant, as the Perſon tempted by the Jews. It is true, they ſpake againſt *Moſes*, and ſtrove with him, *Exod.* 16. 2, 4. and God was provoked by it, as if it had been done againſt

againſt himſelf. * But they are never ſaid *to tempt Moſes.* And he himſelf doth plainly diſtinguiſh their Sin here referred to, from their ſtriving with him, and ſpeaking againſt him, *Exod.* 17. 2. and *ver.* 7. compared. *And* Moſes *ſaid unto them, Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?* And he called the Name of the place *Maſſah*, and *Meribah, becauſe of the chiding of the Children of* Iſrael, *and becauſe they tempted the Lord, ſaying, Is the Lord amongſt us?* To pretend therefore that this is the ſenſe, Neither tempt ye Chriſt *as they tempted Moſes*, is neither agreeable to Grammar or Reaſon: For *the ſame Perſon* ſinned againſt by them, we are cautioned not to offend; not to ſin after the like manner, againſt the ſame Object; not to tempt *Chriſt*, as they did.

* *See Mr.* Daillé *Serm.* in loc. *and* J. Placæi Diſput. 12*m* in loc. 4*to. p.* 130. de Argumentis quibus efficitur Chriſtum prius fuiſſe quam in utero B. Virginis, &c.

The Greek Particle ἐν, or καὶ δὲ, will ſo carry it.

III. THE other Pretence or Cavil againſt our Tranſlation, hath as little Strength. There is one Manuſcript here in *England*, we are told, wherein this Verſe is thus read, *Neither tempt ye God*, as they tempted *him*. But tho that Manuſcript be pretended to be very antient, there are others of greater Antiquity that read it as we do: And, except one or two of the antient Writers of the Church, who read it *the Lord*, *Neither tempt ye the Lord*, and explain it ſtill of *Chriſt*; except them, it hath been proved againſt the Socinians that all Copies of this Epiſtle, Manuſcript and Printed, and all the Verſions of the Greek and Latin Fathers, from the end of the ſecond Century until now, do all read it as we do; *Neither tempt ye Chriſt, as they alſo tempted him.*

BUT

BUT others will ſay it may be read thus, Neither tempt ye *Chriſt* as they tempted *God*. It were enough to reply to this, that there is no ſuch word in the Text. But what the Socinians would gain, if we ſhould allow it, I cannot ſee. Neither tempt ye *Chriſt*, as the Jews tempted *God*. Hereby they *equal* at leaſt, if not *prefer Chriſt unto God*. As Chriſtians ſinning againſt Chriſt, anſwers to the Jews ſinning againſt God; ſo *Chriſt* tempted by Chriſtians, anſwers unto *God* tempted by the Jews: And therefore if the Sin and Puniſhment of the Iſraelites be propoſed as our *Warning*, the Force of the Example is loſt, if it be not an equal Sin, or greater, for us to *tempt Chriſt*, than for the Iſraelites to tempt *God*. And if it be propoſed as *a Type*, the Argument is yet ſtronger, and the Preference is given unto Chriſt. Either way will conclude that he is not a *Creature*, and that he did exiſt before.

before his Incarnation; otherwiſe theſe Jews in the Wilderneſs could not have ſinned againſt him. And thus for the Perſon ſinned againſt, Neither tempt ye *Chriſt*, as they alſo tempted him.

Sect. III.

What was the particular Sin of the Jews, in the Wilderneſs, here called a Tempting of Chriſt.

II. THE particular Sin referred to of the Iſraelites, was their impatient * Murmuring and Diſcontent, their Diſſatisfaction and Complaint, concerning the way which God took to lead them into *Canaan*, and of the Proviſions he made for them in the way, and of the Time and Seaſon of it. For in

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* Numb. 21. 4, 5, 6.

in their March through the Wilderneſs they had ſome Succeſs againſt the *Canaanites*, who came out of their own Country to fight againſt them; and thereupon being puft up with their Victory, they ſuppoſed they ſhould as eaſily prevail againſt the *Idumeans*, who refuſed them leave to paſs through their Country. They hoped that with the like Succeſs againſt them, they might directly and ſpeedily enter into the promiſed Land. But, inſtead of this ſhort and eaſy way to *Canaan*, God reſolves to ſpare the *Idumeans* at this time, and commands the Iſraelites to compaſs the Land of *Edom*, and take a long Circuit round the Mountains of *Idumea*. Upon this occaſion, we find this People break out into Diſcontent againſt God their Leader, forgetting all the former Wonders of his Goodneſs and Power. And this is that which the Apoſtle calls a tempting of *Chriſt*, who as *the Angel of the Cove-*

Covenant conducted them in th
Wilderness. As he calls the Suffe
rings and Afflictions which the Isra-
elites indured in *Egypt*, *the Reproach of Christ*; it being part of the Commendation of *Moses* by the Apostle, and an Instance of his *Faith*, that he preferred *the Reproach of Christ* before the Treasures of *Egypt*.

UPON this, and several other Occasions, they complained and murmured; and are therefore said to have *tempted God ten times*, after they had seen his * Miracles, and had abundant Proof of his Presence and Care. The Jewish Writers do particularly reckon up the several *ten Temptations*; but whether the exact number of *ten* be intended in the Expression, is very doubtful; it may rather import repeated, multiplied Temptations; as when *Jacob* told *Laban*, † *Thou hast changed my*

* Numb. 14. 22. † Gen. 31. 41.

my Wages Ten Times; that is, very frequently.

THEIR Sin might very properly be called *a tempting of him*: For they were not content to go to *Canaaan* in the way which he would have led them, nor were they ſatisfied with the Proviſions that he made for them in the way; but complained of their *Manna*, as light Bread, deſpiſing of it. They would have every thing they had a Mind to, and in that way and manner which they themſelves would chuſe; and thereupon would have put the Power and the Wiſdom, the Truth, and the Goodneſs of God, to farther trial: And by falling often into ſuch a Sin, they tempted *his Patience*, to ſee how long he would bear with them. *How often*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *did they provoke him in the Wilderneſs; and tempt him in the Deſart? Yea, they turned back and tempted God; and limited the Holy One of* Iſrael. *Pſal.* 78. 40, 41.

SECT.

Sect. IV.

Of the Punishment by Fiery Serpents. The Wisdom of Providence therein. Of the Serpent in Paradise. Upon what Accounts Serpents have been reckon'd Sacred and Venerable by the Heathens.

III. IT was for this Sin that they were punished with *Fiery Serpents*, which cost many of them their Lives. There were many such in that Wilderness, who were before restrained, but now let loose: *Serpents*, that by their Venom fired their Blood, and heat their Bodies, so as to torment them with Thirst, and that in a place where there was no Water. We read of the biting of some Serpents, that it affects

affects the Patient with Madneſs. By theſe *Fiery Serpents* they were ſtopt in the laſt Year of their Travel, before they got into the Land of Promiſe. And on this account they murmured at *Salmonah*. But the Sin that was thus puniſhed, and that of their worſhipping the Golden Calf, is concealed by *Philo the Jew*; and *Joſephus*, out of more Love to his Country-men, than Fidelity to Hiſtory, doth not take notice of it.

'TIS the Conjecture of the Learned * Biſhop of *Lincoln*, that "the *Seraphim* and *Urim* were "Images, or Symbols of Mini-"ſtring Angels in the form of *Fi-*"*ery, Flying Serpents*; as *Cheru-*"*bim* were ſuch Images with the "Faces of *Oxen*. So the word "*Saraph* is uſed, *Numb.* 21. 6, 8. "*Deut.* 8. 15. In *Egypt*, *Arabia*, "and *Lybia*, and † other places, "there

* *Dr.* Tenniſon *of Idolatry*, c. 14. p. 352, &c.
† Herodot. l. 2. Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 1.

" there were flying fiery Serpents.
" *Isaiah* mentions such Creatures,
" *Isa.* 14. 29. And * *Abarbanel*
" saith of such flying Serpents, that
" they were Reddish, after the
" Colour of Brass: If that were
" their natural Colour, great Ad-
" dition might be made to it by the
" swift Motion of their Wings, and
" the Vibration of their Tails in
" the bright Atmospheres of *Ara-*
" *bia* and *Egypt*. And so were
" called *fiery*, not only because of
" the Heat of their Venom, causing
" extraordinary Inflammations and
" Thirsts in the Body bitten by
" them; but because they appear-
" ed such, when they flew in the
" Air.

I shall not stay to shew what a vile, what a painful, what an unusual Plague, and (as to ordinary means) an incurable one, this of *the*

* Vid. *G. Mebium* de Æneo Serpente, Exercit. 2. c. 2. §. 11.

the Fiery Serpents was; which gave occaſion to the Erection of *the Brazen Serpent*, as a Figure of *the Meſſiah* to be lifted up upon the Croſs. But if we refuſe to look to him and believe on him, if we do not receive healing Virtue and Influence from him; the more dreadful Puniſhment which we may expect, and the ſorer Vengeance that we are to look for, is what this Plague of *Fiery Serpents* did but typify and repreſent. For the Puniſhment of theſe Jews, is but an Emblem of a more fearful and fiery Indignation, againſt thoſe who will not take warning, but *tempt Chriſt*, as ſome of them alſo did, and were deſtroyed in the Wilderneſs.

IT ſeems an excellent Inſtance of the Wiſdom of the Divine Providence, to order this Puniſhment of the Iſraelites by *Serpents*, and to make way thereby for a Cure by looking to *the Brazen Serpent*. This was proper to rivet the ſenſe of the

firſt

firſt Evil done to Mankind by the Devil, when *the Serpent beguiled our firſt Parents in Paradiſe*; and to preſerve or recover the Memory of it; which we have no more reaſon to take to be all *Allegory*, than the following part of the Moſaick Hiſtory, concerning the Iſraelites March in the Wilderneſs, and their Puniſhment here by Fiery Serpents.

THE famous *Origen*, ſays St. *Hierom*, turned Paradiſe ſo into an Allegory, that he took away the Truth of the Story; and not only turned *Adam* out of the Garden, but the Garden out of Paradiſe.

IT might withal be of uſe to rectify the Error of ſome of the Jews, derived from the Heathen Idolaters, *of the Gods appearing in the form of Serpents:* For we read of the * *Babylonians*, that they worſhipped *a great Dragon*, a Creature of

* See more *Bochartí* Opera, vol. 1. de Serpente Tentatore, *p.* 842.

of a Serpentine Kind: and that in *Egypt*, and in *Phœnicia*, they ſacrificed unto *Dragons*, and called them ἀγαθοδαίμονας, *their good Genius's*. *Eſculapius*, the God of the Phyſicians, was worſhipped under the ſame Form: A *Dragon* is uſually annex'd to his Statue. The ſuperſtitious *Romans* placed the Head of *a Dragon* at the Entrance into their Houſes, imagining thereby to conciliate the Favour of the Gods. And *Alexander the Great* is repreſented as begotten by *a Serpent* with his Mother. The like is feigned of the Birth of other Great Men amongſt the Gentiles.

"IN the earlieſt Ages (ſaith "Dr. *Tenniſon*) and inhabited "Countries of the World, the Creatures on Earth principally reve- "renced were *Oxen* and *Serpents*. "Serpents were lately worſhipped "in *America*, as appears from *Aco- "ſta*, and others. And of old they "were ſacred in *Egypt*. We ſee no

"Table

" Table of *Isis*, or *Osiris*, or *Bacch*
" without a Serpent. Among ho
" many other Nations, it hath bee
" accounted sacred, may * there b
" read at large. The Reasons wh
" Serpents were thus honoured
" might be, partly because they
" could twine themselves into all Fi-
" gures; because of the mighty E-
" nergy of their Venom, and because
" of their mighty Bulk, and because
" they live to a great Age, are of
" quick and piercing Sight, and re-
" new their Youth by putting off
" their Skin: Lastly, by reason that
" the Heathen were over-powered
" by the Craft, Malice and Pride of
" *the Devil*, who deluded Man in
" that Shape, and would as it were
" redeem the Loss he sustain'd in the
" Curse of that Creature, by tur-
" ning it into a venerable Idol.
" If the *Seraphim* (or good An-
" gels ministring in the World)
" had

* Citing *Pignorius* de Mensâ Isiacâ, *p.* 23, 24.

" had not appeared in some such
" Form, * it would be difficult to
" give an account of the Tempta-
" tion of *Adam* and *Eve*, by a Dæ-
" mon in the shape of a Serpent.
" That Serpent is ridiculously pain-
" ted in the form of a creeping one
" before the Fall: It is impossible
" to conceive our first Parents so
" stupid, as to have entred into a
" Dialogue with such a Creature,
" without any Astonishment. But
" being used to the *Shecinah* of the
" *Logos*, and to the Appearance of
" ministring Angels, shewing them-
" selves in some such winged form,
" it is easy to conceive, upon that
" Supposition, how they might en-
" tertain some familiar Discourse
" with a Creature assuming that
" Image in a very spendid and
" glorious manner. The Text as-
" sures us the Form is now changed
" by God's Curse, most probably
" from

* Dr. *Tennison*, Ib. *p.* 245.

" from that of a ſplendid fiery *Sa-*
" *raph*, to that of a mean creeping
" Serpent, not moving aloft in the
" Air, but licking the Duſt. And a
" part of the Puniſhment of *Adam*
" and *Eve* may confirm this. For
" it is ſaid, God guarded Paradiſe
" againſt them by a Cherub and
" a Flaming Sword, which was
" eſteem'd by the Jews a ſecond
" Angel; and may be aptly ima-
" gin'd a *Saraph*, or flaming Angel,
" in the form of a fiery flying Ser-
" pent, whoſe Body vibrated in the
" Air with Luſtre, and may be fit-
" ly deſcribed by the Image of ſuch
" a Sword. *Tertullian* ſaith, that
" the *Serpent from the beginning*
" *was one that ſacrilegiouſly uſurped*
" *the Divine Image.* This ſoundeth
" as if the Devil in Serpentine-
" Form had repreſented part of the
" *Shecinah* of the *Logos*, and that
" *Eve* conceived him to have been
" an Angel appertaining to his
" glorious Preſence, and a Miniſter

" of

" of his Pleasure; and was come " forth from him.

NOW the Punishment of the Jews by these *fiery flying* Serpents, may be a means to revive the Memory of the *Paradisical Serpent*, and to prevent or cure such Fancies amongst them, of *their Divinity*, as the Heathens entertain'd.

SECT. V.

How we may be guilty of the like Sin, Explicitly and Directly, or Implicitly. Two Instances of the former.

BUT I proceed from the Consideration of *their Sin*, and *Punishment*, to enquire into the Nature and Kinds of *our Tempting Christ*, how far we may now be guilty: That *we* may not tempt *Christ* as *They* did. And considering

ing that all Power and Authority is committed unto him, that the Government of the World is upon his Shoulders, that the Father hath committed all Judgment unto the Son, that the Administration of the Kingdom of God in this World, is in the Hands of *Christ* the Mediator; every undue and unnecessary Trial which we make of the *Truth*, or *Power*, or *Knowledg*, or *Grace*, or or *Providence*, or *Patience* of *God*, is a Tempting of *Christ*: unto whom we are related as *our Lord and King*, under whose immediate Government we all are, and by owning of our Christianity avow our selves to be. Therefore every tempting of God is a tempting of *Christ*. And by reason of our clearer Knowledg of the Messiah, and our Christian Profession, we may be guilty of a more criminal tempting of Christ than ever the Jews were, and with many higher Aggravations.

IN.

IN general, to tempt God or Christ, is to make *a needless undue Trial*, or *Inquiry* concerning his Attributes, or his Will; what God doth know, or can do, or will do. And this may be either *implicitly*, as the Language of our Hearts and Lives; or by a more *direct* and *explicit* Tempting of him. The *Former* is more common: but let me name two special Instances of *the Latter*. As,

I. WHEN we demand an unnecessary Discovery of the Divine Power, to confirm and prove that which is sufficiently proved already. This is *a direct explicit tempting of God* and Christ. The God had given the *Jews* sufficient Evidence of his Power, in the various Miracles which he wrought for them in *Egypt*, and in the astonishing manner of *their Deliverance* out of it, and afterwards at *the Red Sea*, and in *the Wilderness*; yet we have

frequent Inſtances of their Unbelief and Murmur, doubting of the Divine Power upon every Occaſion. * *Can he furniſh a Table in the Wilderneſs? Can he give Bread alſo, and provide Fleſh?* Tho he gave *Manna* in the Morning, and *Quails* in the Evening, and their Bread was miraculouſly rained down from Heaven; yet they queſtioned whether he can give *Water* too. And ſome of the Jews tell us, the *Manna* had the virtue to quench *the Thirſt*, as well as to ſatisfy *Hunger*. And tho God had condeſcended, twice to give them Water out of a Rock, as at *Rephidim*, and at *Horeb*; yet do they demand another Proof of his Power and Preſence, *viz. a Table furniſhed with Fleſh.* This was a direct tempting of God.

THUS the Scribes and Phariſees, after our Saviour had ſufficiently proved his Divine Commiſſion by many

* Pſal. 78. 17, *to* v. 20.

many undeniable *Miracles*, they would have him do ſome new Feat for their ſakes. * *Maſter*, ſay they, *we would fain ſee a ſign from Heaven.* They would try whether he could do ſuch things, as the Prophet *Elias* did. They had ſcarce wiped their Eyes, ſince they ſaw a Sign and a Miracle, ſufficient to convince them; but that is not enough, they would ſee another; as if he had not wrought any before. To the like purpoſe they ſpeak when he was *upon the Croſs*, if he would *then* come down; that is, if he would give them *a Miracle in their own way*, and of their own chuſing, then they would believe.

IT is well known, that *the Ceſſation of Miracles* is one pretence of *Infidelity* in our Age, tho a very unreaſonable one. Not to mention the late Account of † ſome Wonders

* Mat. 8. 11. & 16. 1.

† Viz. *The Cure of the French Girl, and of Mrs.* Savage.

ders of Providence that are matter of Diſcourſe amongſt us *at preſent*, (as what is next to *Miracle* at leaſt; for I leave theſe things to be further conſidered, enquired into, and reflected upon, by thoſe that have Opportunity, and Capacity for it.) The Pretence is unreaſonable, not to believe the Scripture for want of *more Miracles*, when the New Teſtament, and the Divine Commiſſion of Chriſt, has been already confirmed by many and ſufficient Signs and Wonders. It is therefore a Tempting of God, to demand a further Diſcovery of his Almighty Power, in this, and in every Age, to confirm that which was proved by Miracles in former Ages. And that the ſame Doctrine of the Goſpel was atteſted by Miracles formerly, we have as great Aſſurance, as the Nature of the thing is capable of: And he is very unreaſonable who will deſire more Evidence, or not be ſatisfied with that. But our

Lord

Lord has told us, that, with moſt Men that make this Objection, it is meer Cavil: For *if they will not believe* Moſes *and the Prophets.* And we may add upon the like ground, *If they will not believe Chriſt and his Apoſtles,* after the Evidence of ſo many Miracles; *neither would they believe, tho one ſhould riſe from the dead.* (The Miracle, of all others, which theſe Men are moſt like to pitch upon, if they might have their Choice.) No, nor if all the Miracles mentioned in the Goſpel were done before their Eyes.

II. IT is *a direct Tempting of God, and Chriſt,* to demand ſome Extraordinary Divine Manifeſtation, to atteſt his Kindneſs, and prove his Preſence, when he has ſufficiently done it already. When, notwithſtanding the Promiſes that God hath made, and the Experience that we and others have had of his Fidelity to them; we muſt have ſome

Extraordinary Sign of his Love and Favour to encourage us, or we will not believe. The Jews in the Wilderneſs are charged with this, *Exod.* 17. 7. And the place was called *Maſſah*, *Temptation*, as a Memorial of it: as it was alſo called *Meribah*, upon the account of their chiding, ſtriving, and contending there. They queſtioned whether God was among them, unleſs he would do thus and thus, as they deſired. After all the Proof which they had of his Preſence, they would not believe it without farther Teſtimony, and Evidence in their own way. Now to doubt and disbelieve the Divine Favour and Preſence, after ſuch peculiar Experience, and Atteſtation as he had given them, is plainly to *Tempt* him. *They believed not God*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *and truſted not in his Salvation. Tho he had commanded the Clouds from above, and opened the Doors of Heaven. They ſinned ſtill,*

and

and believed not for his wonderous Works. They turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. *They remembred not his Hand, nor the Day when he delivered them from the Enemy.* Psal. 78. 22, 32, 41, 42.

AFTER this manner, the Devil tempted Christ to throw himself down from the Pinacle of the Temple; * *If thou be the Son of God.* To which our Saviour replies, *It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* That is, "I am "sufficiently satisfied that God is "my Father, I do not question his "Care over me, I am satisfied of "his gracious Presence with me, "I need no such new Trial of his "Kindness and Love.

IF at any time we are ingaged in any special Work and Duty, and meet with Opposition therein; but have the Promise of God to encourage

* Matth. 4. 6.

courage us to go on, and have the Experience of his former Goodness and Power in difficult Cases, as these Jews had: For us to distrust God, without farther and new Signs of his Favour, is directly to *Tempt* him. The Israelites fell often into this Fault: tho they had seen his Works of Power, as in dividing of the Sea; some Works of Majesty and Terror, as in the Thunder and Lightning, Fire, Smoke and Earthquake, at the giving of the Law; some of his Severity against Sin, as in drowning of the *Egyptians*, in the Punishment of *Korah*, *Dathan* and *Abiram*; and the Plagues that befel themselves; and had also Experience of many Works of Favour, Kindness and Grace, and of a watchful Providence for their constant Protection and Supply, Guidance and Conduct; and hereby had the highest Security that God would accomplish his Promises to them: They yet questioned and

and doubted after all. They sometimes professed their Faith and Confidence in God, upon some new Appearance or some mighty Work of Providence for their sakes. Upon such an Occasion we read that *the People feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his Servant* Moses, *Exod.* 14. 31. But upon the next difficult Trial, they forgat the Kindness of Heaven, they renounced their own Experience, they despised the Faithfulness of God, which before they acknowledged, and are again guilty of Murmuring and Unbelief.

THIS kind of tempting of God many amongst us may be guilty of: when, after eminent Preservations in a time of Danger, or wonderful Deliverances from threatning Death, or other peculiar Favours of Divine Providence, we will not thereby be led to Repentance and Obedience, to Trust and Dependance; but overlook all that God has done

for

for us, as if it were nothing, unless he will do somewhat more. As if all his former Works had nothing in them of Value, or Obligation, or Encouragement. Which leads me to consider the next thing.

SECT. VI.

The many ways of implicit, indirect Tempting Christ. Some instances with respect to his Truth.

Secondly, THERE is an *Implicit, Indirect Tempting of God,* as to his *Truth, Power, Knowledg, Providence, Grace, Patience,* &c. whereof we may be many ways guilty.

I. AS to *the* Truth *of God.* When we disbelieve what he hath *promised* or *threatned,* and question his Fidelity to make it good.

This

This is contrary to the Nature and Office of *Faith*, whose Excellency it is to give Glory to God, by believing in the most difficult Cases. Many a convinced Sinner, under the sense of his former Guilt, when he sees the Aggravations of his Folly, and of his Rebellion, does thus tempt God, by doubting of the Truth of his Word to pardon and forgive such Sinners as he, tho he should never so truly and unfeignedly Repent. Whereas God has expresly told us, that *if the Wicked forsake his Way, and the Unrighteous Man his Thoughts, he will multiply Pardons:* And that *the Blood of Christ cleanseth from all Sin.* Many a melancholy, timerous Christian, under the sense of their own Weakness, may likewise incur this Guilt, by questioning the Grace of God to enable them to persevere, by reason of the present Temptations they meet with, or those they expect: Tho God has told us, that

his

his Grace shall be sufficient, and that *he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able*; and that *he who hath begun a good Work, will carry it on, and perfect it to the Day of Christ.*

GOD had expressly promised to bring the *Jews* into the Land of *Canaan*; but their Journey had been long and tedious, they were discouraged because of the Way, they were founder'd in their Patience, and could not stay God's Leisure; and therefore questioned his Word of Promise; and so they tempted him concerning his *Truth*.

BUT it is more common to tempt him with respect to the Truth of his *Threatnings*. As if he were not resolved to fulfil his Word against those who are finally Impenitent, and Unbelieving. Tho he hath told us, That *he that made them will will shew them no Mercy*: And that *the Wicked shall be turned into Hell, with All of every Nation that continue*

tinue to forget God: And that *Christ shall be revealed from Heaven in flaming Fire, to render Vengeance to them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel:* Yet Sinners believe it not, they will venture to see what will become of the Threatning: By a like Presumption with those, *Isa.* 5. 19. *Let him make haste, and hasten his Work, that we may see it: Let the Counsel of the Holy One of* Israel, *and his threatned Vengeance draw nigh and come, that we may know it.*

THE first Imposture, by which the Devil tempted and allured our first Parents, was of this kind; *Ye shall not surely die.* As if the threatning of Divine Wrath against obstinate and incorrigible Sinners, had more of *Terror* in it, than of *Truth*; and that Men should never be called to an Account hereafter, for what they do in this World: at least should never be condemned to Eternal Torments, tho they live

and

and die in their Unbelief, and Impenitence. As if God would be more merciful than his Threatnings can impect, tho he hath told us, how far his Mercy shall reach, and to whom, and that the Day of his Patience is concluded at fartheſt with the Day of our Death. But thus to *presume* against express Scripture, that there shall be *no Judgment*, and *no Hell*, or that it shall not be *Eternal*, when it is as expressly said that *the Wicked shall go away into Everlasting Punishment, as the Righteous into Life Eternal*; this is to Tempt God with respect to his *Truth*. Men in the Vigor of their Strength, when their Spirits are inflamed with Wine, and their Hearts hardened by Atheistical Company and Discourse, may dare to talk thus presumptuously; but we find the same Persons on a sick Bed, when they approach to the other World, and apprehend they can stay no longer in this, have

common-

commonly other Apprehensions of these things: their Hearts sink, their Courage fails them, and they would rather *die the Death of the Righteous*, however they formerly derided the Folly of *their Life*.

SECT. VII.

Of Tempting God, and Christ, with respect to the Divine Power, *in several Instances.*

II. AS to *the Power of God*, we may be said to Tempt him *two* ways. 1. When we question the Sufficiency of his Power to make good his Word. 2. When we limit and confine it, to be exercised and discovered in our own way and manner.

1. WHEN we question *the Power of God* to accomplish his Word, by reason of some Difficul-

ties

ties that are in the way. In this reſpect the *Jews* tempted God, after he had promiſed to bring them unto *Canaan*: When the Spies, who returned from viewing the Land, and gave them an account of *the Giants* and *the Sons of Anak* that were there, and the ſeeming Impoſſibility * of conquering it; they were quite diſheartened. Thus, ſays our Saviour, did *the Sadducees err* about the Poſſibility of † *the Reſurrection of the Body, not knowing the Scripture, nor the Power of God.* But we have very ſtrange Thoughts of Almighty Power, if we do not believe, and grant that it can do much more than we are able to apprehend diſtinctly, after what manner it can be done.

2. WHEN we *limit* and *confine* the Power of God, as to the manner and ſeaſon of its Manifeſtation. The Jews are charged with this Tempting

* Numb. 14. † Mat. 22. 29.

Tempting God, and *limiting the Holy One of* Israel. At one time the *Manna* doth not please them, they must have *Flesh*, and then they must have *Water*: They must have what they had a Mind to, and in their own Method, or they question whether God could do this or that. To this purpose do many distrust God, when he doth not answer their Prayers, and grant their Desires, at *that time*, or in *that way*, when they expect it: They will wait on the Lord no longer, if he do not deliver and save them, either by such Instruments, or in such a Method, as they have contrived and carved for themselves.

MANY Instances might be named of *a sinful limiting the Power of God*. One, among others, is that of *rash Appeals to Heaven*, expecting that God by his powerful Providence should interpose to the Decision of doubtful Cases. And this Men do, in the use of such things,

unto

unto which some notable Effects are ascribed, which they were never inabled or appointed, by Nature or Divine Institution, to produce: As when a Person was indicted upon Suspicion, or for a Fault that was secretly committed, or upon the Testimony but of one Witness, he was to purge himself by *Ordeal Fire* or *Water*; that is, to put himself upon God, and Appeal to him.

THIS was allowed by some of the Laws of *Charles the Great*, and was in frequent use in this Nation in the *Saxons* time. Many Instances in the *ninth* and *tenth Century* may be given of this, as a common Practice in the Christian World: when there was not sufficient Evidence of a Man's Guilt, to put him on such Extraordinary Trials, expecting some miraculous Appearance of God, to vindicate his Innocence, or conclude against it. In such doubtful Cases they said they would go *ad Judicium Dei*, they would

would appeal to Heaven. Many ways they had of this, in different Forms, and ſeveral Ceremonies, and particular Prayers, with Faſting and Adjurations in the Name of God, to the particular Element; various according to the Quality of the Perſon, whether *a Freeman*, or *a Slave*; that is, one of a mean and baſe Condition; the *former* was to be tried by * *Fire*, and the *latter* by *Water*, hot or cold.

BUT what Ground have we to think, that if Men are *Innocent*, the Power of God will this way preſerve them; or if they be *Guilty*, that he will leave them to ſuffer by it? It is true, he appointed under the Law a Draught of bitter Waters for *the Woman ſuſpected of Adultery*, to diſcover her Innocency, or Guilt; this was peculiarly enacted by

* See *Spelman*'s Gloſſary, *p.* 435, 436. *N. Bacon*'s Hiſtory of the Laws of *England*, firſt Part, *p.* 55, 56. *Dugdale*'s Origines Judiciales, *p.* 86, 87. *Coke*'s 9 Repl. 32. *Glanvil.* p. 114.

by God himself, who doubtless would assist such Extraordinary Procedure, as was of his own Institution. But it is not for us to use such Methods of our own devising, and expect the like Success.

* *PHILIP de Comines* tells us of two *Franciscan Friars* at *Florence*, who offer'd themselves to the Fire to prove *Savonarola* to be a Heretick: But a certain *Jacobine* offer'd himself to the Fire, to prove that *Savonarola* had true Revelations, and was no Heretick. In the mean time *Savonarola* preach'd, and made no such confident Offer: nor durst he venture at that new kind of Fire Ordeal. But if all four had past through the Fire, and died in the Flames, what would that have proved? Had he been an Heretick, or no Heretick, the more or the less for the Confidence of two or three Zealots?

THEY

* Lib. 8. Chap. 19.

THEY who are well eſtabliſhed in the Belief of the future Judgment, will be eaſily ſatisfied, that we ought not to expect that God ſhould oblige himſelf to declare one way or other in ſuch Caſes.

IT is not unlikely that the Practice of *Duelling* came in upon this bottom; for the Trials by *ſingle Combat and Battel*, are founded on the like Superſtition, and Folly of People, thus appealing to the Judgment of God, to decide Caſes in an Extraordinary Manner.

IT has formerly been frequent among the * Northern Nations, when the Right of Titles, or of Lands was difficult, thus by *legal, ſingle Combats*, to decide it: Or when a Perſon accuſed, did abſolutely deny what the Accuſer affirmed, and no other Proof on either ſide could be produced. And even after

* See Sir *Will. Temple's* Miſcellanies, Part 2. Eſſay 3. Sect. 4. p. 243.

after the Profession of Christianity among the *Goths*, and those Kingdoms erected by them, this Practice continued. But upon the farther Progress of Learning and Civility, when this could be no longer approved; it made way for * *private Duels*, and for *the Lie* being a just Ground of fighting in Point of Honour, because it had been so in Point of Law, during the barbarous Ages. But it were shameful it should be so esteemed amongst us Christians. The Example of *Charles the Fifth*, and *Francis the First* of *France* gave it much Encouragement; and much of the best Blood in *Christendom* has been spilt after this manner, especially in *France*, during several Reigns, till by the just Severity of *the present French King* (how unjust soever in other things) this Custom is in great measure extinguished there.

SOME

* See Bishop *Hall*, Epist. 2. Dec. 4. *Of the bloody Use of single Combats: The Danger and Sinfulness thereof.*

SOME have expected the like Success, upon receiving *the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.* Among some of the *Romanists,* if any thing were stolen in a Monastery, where one of the House must have been the Thief, and all denied it; they were all to receive *the Sacrament,* and these words were pronounced, *Corpus Domini nostri sit tibi ad Probationem,* Let the Body of our Lord be thy Trial. There are many others, who will take *the Sacrament* upon their Asseveration of such or such a thing, to ascertain the Truth of it; as if what they had said, or sworn, must needs be true, in case no evil Effect did visibly follow upon their taking the Sacrament. But *these,* and *other such Uses* of that Divine Institution, are a bold Tempting of God. It is designed and appointed, to commemorate the Death of Christ till he come, not to discover *Thieves* or *Liars*; nor to attain *other Civil Ends,* for which

it hath been formerly used, and is yet required in some parts of the World.

Sect. VIII.

Of Tempting Christ, with respect to his Knowledg.

Thirdly. THERE is Another Instance of Tempting God and Christ, *viz. with respect to his Knowledg.* And this we may be guilty of several ways. Partly by adventuring to sin *in secret*, when we are concealed from the Knowledg and Notice of our Fellow-Creatures. We do in effect say, "Can he behold me "when the Door is shut? Can his "Eye pierce the thick Cloud? Thus we tempt him as to his *Knowledg*, and *Omniscience*, whether he can discern us, and make our Sin

to find us out. Partly by pretending to ask Counsel of God, when we are resolved already in our own Minds what to do. After Vows, to make Inquiry, and after being resolved to ask Advice, is a Mockery and an Affront, and *a Tempting of God*, as if he did not know the Purposes of our Heart.

BUT there is a more plain Tempting of him in respect of *his Knowledg*, by *Hypocrisy* in Divine Worship: by drawing nigh to him with our Bodies in the Solemnities of Religion: by appearing in a worshipping Posture before him, and taking his Name within our Lips, while our Hearts are not ingaged. Hereby *we Tempt God*, and would make a bold Trial whether he can distinguish between Substance and Shadow, Reality and Appearance, between the Worship of the Heart, and the Complement of the outward Man, between a dead Carcass and a living Sacrifice.

IN short, we Tempt God as to his *Knowledg*, by the secret Indulgence of any Wickedness, under the Pretence and Profession of Religion. This Charge is given against the Wife of *Ananias*, *Acts* 5. 9. that *she tempted God, and lied unto the Holy Ghost*; because she and her Husband kept back *part of the Price of their Possession*, when they pretended to bring *the whole*: And so discovered a covetous Mind, and the prevailing Love of this World; while they kept up the Profession of Religion, and would maintain the Reputation of being zealous, and forward Disciples. Every *Hypocrite*, who does compass God about with Lies, and lives in the Allowance of any secret Lust, under the colour of Religion, does thus *Tempt* God, and Christ as to his *Knowledg*.

SECT. IX.

Of Tempting God, and Christ with respect to his Providence, *in several Instances.*

Fourthly. ANOTHER Instance of a criminal Tempting of God, is with respect to *his Providence.* All Power and Authority being now in the Hands of *Christ*, we may tempt him in this Particular, either,

1. BY distrusting his Care, Protection, and Assistance, when we have sufficient Ground for our Dependance, and Confidence that he will not fail us. While we keep in the way of our Duty, he has promised to be with us, and never to forsake us. Now tho the ordinary way of Relief for the present be not in view, it is to tempt God, *to*

diſtruſt him; as if our Hope were periſhed, and he had forgotten us. It is true, in ſome Caſes we may not poſitively conclude either way, but ſay with *David*, *Let the Lord do what ſeemeth him good:* But in others, we ſhould truſt him for the particular Mercy, when all Means ſeem to fail in an ordinary way: As when Mercies are expreſly, and particularly promiſed, as a Son was to *Abraham*, and the Kingdom unto *David*. The like when God leads us into Straits by ingaging us in his Service; as when *Iſrael* followed him in *the Wilderneſs*, in order to the Poſſeſſion of the promiſed Land. When they had no Water to drink, nor Food to eat, and ſo no poſſibility of Supply in the Wilderneſs, they ought poſitively to have expected Supplies from God, in an extraordinary way: And it is reckoned as their Sin, that they did *not believe*. Thus when *Chriſt* was led by the Spirit into the Wilderneſs,

derneſs, and there was no Bread there to ſatisfy his Hunger, he refuſes to work a Miracle for his Supply, and leans upon an Extraordinary Providence*.

MOREOVER, when the things we want are common and univerſal Bleſſings, and ſuch without which we cannot ſubſiſt. Such Supplies from Providence we muſt poſitively expect, tho we ſee not the way, whence they ſhould ariſe to us: becauſe God is ingaged to preſerve his Creatures in their ſeveral Stations, to clothe the Graſs of the Field, and to feed the Birds of the Air, *&c.* † *Shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith?* Hence the Prophet *Habakkuk* reſolves upon a rejoicing Confidence in God, when neither Field, nor Tree, nor Flock could yield any Relief in an ordinary way. The

* *Gilpin* of Satan's Temptations, Part 3. c. 11.
† Mat. 6. 30.

like may be said, when God is eminently ingaged for our Help, because his Honour lies at stake in that very matter; so that whether he *will help* or no, or whether he *is able*, is become *the Controversy*, upon which Religion in its Truth, or the Honour of God, is to be tried. In such a Case, we are ingaged to a certain Belief of Help. The three Children upon this Ground, did not only assert that God *was able* to deliver them, but that *he would deliver* them, that the Fire should not burn them. On the like Ground *Christ* rebukes his Disciples for Unbelief, in their Fears of Shipwrack in a great Storm, because *he was with them*; and consequently it had unavoidably contradicted his Design, and reflected upon his Honour, if he had suffered his Disciples at that time to be drowned. But,

2. WE Tempt him as to *his Providence*, if we pretend to trust it, and yet neglect the common and ordi-

ordinary Means, which he hath appointed, and may be had. Thus the Devil would have *Chriſt* to caſt himſelf down from the Pinacle of the Temple, when there was an eaſy way of going down ſafely by the Stairs and Steps. We may expect God's Bleſſing upon our Diligence, in the uſe of lawful Means, but muſt not pretend to truſt him with the neglect of what is in our Power to be done. We muſt not look that Water ſhould be fetched out of a Rock for us *by Miracle*, when there is hope we may find a Spring, if we will but dig for it; or that we ſhould be able to ſwim croſs an Arm of the Sea, when we may have a Veſſel to tranſport us. We muſt not look for Bread from Heaven, as the Iſraelites had it, if the Ground will bear Corn, and we will not plough or ſow. It is to Tempt God, to expect Recovery from Sickneſs, without the uſe of Means, when they may be had;

or Supplies of Poverty, without Diligence to ſeek Relief; or Deliverance in Danger, if we ſit ſtill and will do nothing that is within our reach. When our Lord was *in the Wilderneſs*, and Proviſion could not be had for the Multitude that followed him; he then made uſe of his Almighty Power to multiply a few Loaves, and two or three little Fiſhes, into ſufficient Proviſions for thouſands: But at other times, when he was near a Town, we find that *he ſent his Diſciples to buy Food*, Joh. 4. To expect the End, without uſing the Means that are within our Power, is *a Tempting of God.*

BUT it is more common in Spiritual and Religious Matters, than in Civil and Temporal Ones. How many do hope for Divine Acceptance, without fearing God, and working Righteouſneſs; and that they ſhall die the Death of the Righteous, tho they continue all

their

their Days to be Workers of Iniquity?

3. WHEN we repine, and murmur at his Disposal of us and ours. When we are dissatisfied with our State and Condition in the World; when the Station he has put us in, and the Provision he has made for us, doth not content and please us; tho it may be we have such Fruits of his Wisdom, Care and Love, as to these things, that many of our Betters have not. Herein did the *Israelites* sin in the Wilderness: This Dissatisfaction occasioned all their Murmurings, and Complaints; upon the account whereof they are so often said to *Tempt God*, and to provoke him.

4. IT is a tempting of God as to *his Providence*, when we venture upon *Unnecessary, Avoidable Dangers*, and expect that God should interpose to preserve us. He that will give his Angels charge to preserve us, *while we keep in his way*, hath

hath not promiſed to bring us off in Safety when we expoſe our ſelves to Danger, without his Warrant. Thus *our Lord* replies to *Satan*, that it is to *Tempt God* for any one to fall from the Pinacle of the Temple, upon a falſe Aſſurance, that the Angels would be at hand to prevent his Danger.

MANY have paid dear for their Preſumption in this reſpect, and too late bethought themſelves, Where was my Call? What did I here? What a raſh Adventure did I make? St. *Paul* would not have had the Centurion put to Sea in ſtormy Weather; and it coſt them the loſs of all that they had, but their Lives, that they did not hearken to him: ſo much was God diſpleaſed with ſuch bold adventurous Enterprizes. *A wiſe Man feareth, and departeth from evil*, (ſaith *Solomon*) *but a Fool rageth and is confident*: Prov. 14. 16. When *David* had raſhly ſent three of his Captains, to feteh him Water

from

from the Well of *Bethlehem* by the Gate, with the extreme hazard of their Lives; as ſoon as he reflects, his Heart ſmote him, and he would not drink it, ſaying, * *Is not this the Blood of the Men, that went in Jeopardy of their Lives?* God commanded *the Leper* ſhould dwell alone without the Camp, and that no clean Perſon ſhould come near him, becauſe of the Contagion. They who are *in Health*, are not obliged to accompany with *the Sick* in infectious Diſeaſes, unleſs to give them neceſſary Succour in a Spiritual or Temporal Way, and therein we may expect Divine Preſervation.

IT is obſervable, that, when the Plague was great in *Iſrael*, *David* would not go up to offer Sacrifice at *Gibeon*, where was the Tabernacle of the Lord that *Moſes* had made in the Wilderneſs, and the Altar of Burnt-Offering, becauſe *he was*

* 2 Sam. 23, 17.

was afraid of the Sword of the Angel of the Lord, that is, *of the Peſtilence*, 1 Chron. 21. 30. And the Apoſtle *Paul*, tho he deſired to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt; yet when his Life was ſought after, he fled away from his Enemies, becauſe he would not Tempt the Providence of God.

SECT. X.

It is a Tempting of Providence, *to uſe unlawful, or ſuſpected Means to accompliſh our Deſires, or ſupply our Wants.*

Fifthly. IT is another Inſtance of Tempting God as to his *Providence*, when we make uſe of unlawful or ſuſpected Methods to accompliſh that which we deſire. Many ſick People, by reaſon of Im-

patience

patience under Pain, from the Fear of Death, or over-eager Deſires of a ſpeedy Recovery, will venture to make uſe of ſuch things in order to it, as have no natural Virtue or Influence towards ſuch an Effect; As the pronouncing of ſuch or ſuch hard words, to charm away the Diſeaſe, the carrying ſuch or ſuch things about them, uſing *Taliſmanical Figures*, &c. and many other ſuch Methods, whereof no tolerable Account can be given, but that the Effect, when there is any, muſt proceed from a very ill Cauſe, or what we have reaſon to ſuſpect to be ſo.

I could mention Inſtances of ſad Effects of uſing ſuch Methods of Cure: Among others there is one * printed, of a Gentlewoman having an Ague, a Beggar gave her a Charm to hang about her Neck, bid

* By my Reſpected Friend Mr. *J. M.* Letters to a ſick Friend, 8°. *Letter* 15.

bid her not read it, but when ſhe was cured, burn it. The Miniſter of the Pariſh (being a ſober, learned, and pious Conformable Divine) came caſually to viſit her: She telling him the Medicine, and the Cure which had attended it, threw it into the Fire in his Preſence; but he catching it, read it; the words were, *Ague, farewel, till you and I meet in Hell.* Upon hearing of which ſhe fell into her Ague again, with greater Violence than ever; and alſo into a deep Melancholy, which occaſion'd her to lay *violent Hands on her ſelf.*

THE like may be ſaid for *Amulets*, and things uſed to preſerve from Infection in a time of *Peſtilence*, or for Security of Mens Perſons in a time of War; or of Herbs and Plants to preſerve from Witchcrafts, and Power of Evil Spirits. Such things, I mean, which can have no natural Efficacy to produce the deſired Effect; as *Charms*, and

Spells,

Spells, and *Magical Arts*, and many insignificant Forms of Words, with their several Modes and Manners of Pronunciation, used to avert Evils from themselves, or their Substance, their Fruits, &c. which many, amongst the * *Romanists*, do commonly make use of, with great shew of Devotion.

THESE things are granted by all to have no natural Aptitude for these Effects; and therefore must receive their Force, either from *God*, or from *the User*, or from *the Devil*. Not from God, for there is no Divine Revelation on which to bottom such a Faith, which the Apostles had in the Miracles they wrought. If we expect it, either from our Selves, or from the Devil; it is to give the Glory that is due to God,

* See Dr. *Tomlinson* on the First Commandment, Part 8. And Mr. *Incr. Mather*'s Essay for recording of *Illustrious Providences*, 8°. Chap. 8. p. 248, 254. and 264, 284. at large.

God, either to *Satan*, or to *our Selves*. When we use any such Means with the expectation of Success, it is a kind of Magick which the Devil himself owns, and gives Life to. So is it to use any Arts, Rites, or Ceremonies, not understood, of which we can give no Rational or Divine Account: Tho he may not be visibly and corporally present, or require presently any farther Covenants from the Users of them.

THE Devil, no question, is present at his own Rites and Ceremonies, tho Men discern him not; and may, upon the use of them, secretly produce those Effects, which may gain Credit to them. They fence themselves, as one saith, with the Devil's Shield, against the Devil's Sword: Tho the Persons have no Intention of making Application to the Devil; yet if they make use of such Means for their Preservation from Diseases or Dangers, or for the attaining of other Purposes, they

hey are chargeable with this Guilt, becauſe the Succeſs cannot reaſonably be expected from any other, but *Satan*. Eſpecially if we will continue in ſuch a Practice, after the expreſs Cautions given by God againſt the uſe of ſuch things, and his Deteſtation of them, declared by caſting out the * Nations that poſſeſſed the Land of *Canaan*, before the Iſraelites, upon this very Account.

* Levit. 19. & 20. 6, 23. & Deut. 18. 10, 11, 12.

Sect. XI.

Of laying Wagers concerning the future Determinations of Divine Providence.

Sixthly. I MIGHT under this Head, add a modern Inſtance of *Tempting the Providence of God*, or that which I think *is a very*

very bold Trifling with it; for Men to lay considerable *Wagers*, and make a Trade of it likewise, upon the future Determinations of Providence, about the Success of Fleets, and Armies, *&c.* Whether such or such a besieged Town shall be taken, and delivered up upon such a Day or no. I would fain ask what Direction there is from the Word of God, or what Example of holy Men in Scripture, or in former Ages, to countenance this Practice. What Encouragement have Men to pray for the Blessing of Heaven every Morning, upon such new Methods of getting Money? If you pray for Success in these Wagers, you must sometimes contradict another part of your own Prayers, for the Progress of the Reformed Religion, and the Welfare of *England*; and if you wage one with another, God cannot hear one of you, without denying the other, who lays on the other side. If Men lose an

Estate,

Eſtate, or bring themſelves and Families to Poverty or Straits, by ſuch Methods as theſe; they will be apt to have many uneaſy Thoughts about it, and hardly will be able to ſay with *Job*, *It was the Lord who gave, and who hath taken away, Bleſſed be his Holy Name.*

BESIDES that, it argues ſomething in the Temper of Mens Minds, that is worſe than the thing it ſelf, *viz.* the want of a due Concern about the Publick Affairs of *Europe*, and of what God is doing in the World. But it not only diſcovers an ill Temper of Mind, but has a very great Influence to make it worſe. As has been obſerved of ſeveral who have fallen into this new way of Trade.

SOME ſuch Reflections, it may be, would reach unto other doubtful ways of *Trade* in this City. But I pretend not to underſtand Matters of Trade ſufficiently, ſo as to give a poſitive Opinion in theſe Affairs; but

but earnestly desire you would remember, and consider this, That, *in doubtful Cases, the safest side is to be chosen.* And thus for Tempting God as to his *External Providence.*

Sect. XII.

Of Tempting Christ, with respect to his Inward Grace, *and the Assistance of the Holy Spirit: Especially by bold venturing upon Temptation, and the Occasions of Sin.*

Seventhly. ANOTHER way of Tempting God, and Christ, is with respect to *his inward Grace and Assistance.* Either,

1. WHEN we are not satisfied with the ordinary Influence of the Spirit of Grace, in the Duties of Religion; but are disquieted and per-

perplexed, if we have not such *extraordinary Transports*, and *Assurances*, and *Manifestations* of special Kindness, as he hath not promised: If we have not such sensible Consolation, and Quickning in every Ordinance, such Enlargement in every solemn Duty, &c. If we have not these, we make hard Conclusions against God and our selves: But this is to *prescribe* to God, and so is *a Tempting* of him. The like may be said of those who limit God unto such Means, and unto such a Time, for their Assurance and Peace of Conscience, &c. or else they are ready to despair of it for ever. It is to oblige God absolutely, where he has not bound himself: what we desire, not being absolutely necessary in it self, or so necessary as the Glory of God some other way.

WE must not therefore make Experiments of his Love to us, by his granting our Desires in these Particulars. A Father will not allow

low a Child to say, If you love me, let me have this or that, at such a time, and in such a manner; but when he submissively begs and receives it, he may say, Now I know my Father loves me. But we Tempt God, when we would tie him up to our Circumstances, of Time, Manner, and Measure, in these, as well as in other Cases.

2. WHEN we voluntarily run into *Temptation*, and hope the Grace of God will secure us; tho we do, or may, very well know, that where we go, and what we do, is like to prove *a Snare*, and an *Occasion* of Sin. If in the discharge of our Duty to God we meet with Temptation, we may hope his Grace will be sufficient for us: But if we will play upon the Hole of the Asp, and come near the Cockatrice Den; if we will walk by the House of the strange Woman, when we may avoid it: If we will make bold with the Opportunities, and Incentives,

and

and Provocatives of Sin: If we will frequent ſuch Places, and ſuch Company, as did formerly inſnare us: If we will gratify our Senſes, our Appetites, or our Curioſity in ſuch Things, whereby we and others have formerly been defiled; and then expect *the Extraordinary Aſſiſtance of God's Grace* to preſerve us, this is *a Tempting of Chriſt.*

HE that dares come cloſe to the Threſhold of a Sin, as one ſays, will ſoon be pluck'd within the Door; for he hath Tempted the Lord his God. He that cannot ſwim, and will plunge himſelf into a deep River, if he ſink and be drowned, may thank his own Preſumption. You know how unable you are to ſtand againſt Temptation; and therefore it is deſperate Boldneſs to adventure where you are ſure to be Tempted. *Can a Man take Fire into his Boſom, and his Clothes not be burnt?* Prov. 26. 27. You put your ſelves out of the

Protection of God's Grace, and give the Devil an Advantage against you; and so it is no wonder if you are overcome. You cannot pretend the Strength of the Temptation for your Excuse, for you might have avoided the Snare. Never say that you could not resist the Temptation, it was so strong, when you might have avoided it, so as not to have been Tempted.

THE more we know of the Corruption of our Nature, the more Reason shall we see for daily Prayer to God, that he would *not lead us into Temptation*: for we are seldom brought into Temptations, and brought off from them, without Sin. When the Devil comes to us, he cannot say that he finds nothing in us upon which to fasten: As is said concerning our *Blessed Saviour*, Joh. 14. 30. *The Prince of this World cometh, and hath nothing in me.* His Temptations could not enter, there was no inward Lust to receive them.

them. But our Hearts are ready to kindle upon the least Spark that falls: As soon as Satan knocks, we open the Door and entertain him. We have so much Experience of this, that it were the greatest Folly in the World to venture upon Temptation, and expect the Help of that Grace, which we know we have forfeited. A Man may as well put his Finger into the Fire, and hope he shall not feel Pain.

IF *Peter* will go into the High Priest's Hall without a Warrant, no wonder if he fall. If People will marry without any regard to Religion in their Choice; if they care not where they dwell, or with whom, or what kind of Persons they have for their Domesticks; if Persons that pretend to Religion will frequent Play-Houses, and read filthy Histories, or Comedies, or obscene Poetry, (for the Wit or Language-sake, as they say; that

is, will rake into a filthy Dunghil, in hopes of finding a Jewel, with the manifeſt hazard of being poiſoned by the Stench;) if they will adventure the corrupting of their Principles, by hearkening to every bold Atheiſt, that will burleſque the Holy Scriptures, and overturn the Foundations of all Chriſtianity, if not of Natural Religion too; ſuch Perſons they *tempt God* to leave them to themſelves; and the Event will prove what need there was of praying, and indeavouring, that we may not fall into *Temptation.*

I INSIST the longer upon this, becauſe it is ſo neceſſary to be conſidered by All: to take heed how we tempt God, by making bold with the Occcaſions of Sin. It is a merciful Providence to have our Circumſtances, and Condition of Life ſo ordered, that we muſt go out of our way to Sin, we muſt ſeek it with ſome Difficulty. For more Grace is needful to ſave us from

from Sin in the Neighbourhood of great Temptations, than while we are at a diſtance. Every one therefore, according to the Sins he knows himſelf moſt inclined to, ſhould watch to keep as far as lawfully he may from Temptation. Why ſhould we eat that which we know we muſt vomit up again? do that which we know we muſt Repent of? And if you may not eat, why ſhould you taſte? And if you may not taſte, why ſhould you deſire to See it, or have it before you, or come near it? Read the fifth, ſixth and ninth Chapters of the *Proverbs*; and what is ſpoken concerning one Sin, is true of the Occaſions that lead to others.

IF we will not keep at a diſtance from the Snare, we gratify Satan, and provoke God to leave us in his Hands. It is poſſible you may come off ſafe from the Occaſions to ſin, but you are not ſure of that Grace that is needful to it. Your

Experience may teach you, your frequent Falls may inſtruct you, how dangerous it is to have Tempting Objects *near*, and *in view*. To ſee whether I am able to reſiſt Temptation, when I may avoid it, is boldly to tempt God, and to ſin for Trial-ſake. We ſhould keep as far as we may, from the Confines of that Fire that is apt to put our Paſſions into a Fever, and raiſe Diſorders in our Souls. The *Nazarites*, who by the Law of God were obliged to abſtain from Wine, or ſtrong Drink, or any Liquor of Grapes, were forbidden alſo to eat of the Grape green or dried; they were not ſo much as to taſte of the Husk or Kernel, or of the Skin of a Grape, or Raiſin *.

IF we know that ſuch or ſuch things have been Snares to us heretofore, and are like to prove ſo again; that ſuch a Game, or ſuch a Con-

* Numb. 6. 3, 4.

Converſation, is like to be prejudicial to me in particular, and draw me to ſin; I am acceſſory to the Temptation, and to all the Sin and Miſchief that follows, if yet I will venture.

THEY who ſeem the beſt prepared, and reſolved, do yet need this Caution: For none can tell what they are, till Trial, and Occaſion diſcover them. To be Temperate, when a Man hath not wherewithal to be otherwiſe: To be Chaſte, and have no Temptation to Uncleanneſs; to appear Meek, and have no Provocation; or for a Servant to be Juſt, and not to pilfer and ſteal, while his Maſter's Eye is upon him; this is comparatively a ſmall Matter. But to be chaſte in *Sodom*, to be temperate, as *Timothy* in *Aſia*, amongſt the luxurious *Epheſians*; to be awed by the Fear of God, and kept from Folly, when ſolicited to it, as *Joſeph*; this is the Trial of our Strength. If a

Man be ſo fooliſh, as out of choice to ſtand near a Precipice, a ſmall Puſh will throw him over, when a far greater would not have hurt him upon a Level.

AUSTIN relates the Story of his Friend *Alyppius*, who, by the Importunity of his Acquaintance, conſented to go to the Theatre; yet with a Reſolution not to open his Eyes, leſt the ſight of thoſe Spectacles ſhould intice his Heart: But being there, the Noiſe and ſudden ſhouting of the Multitude prevailed ſo far with him that he forgot his Reſolution, takes the liberty to ſee what occaſioned the Shout; and once ſeeing, is now ſo enflamed with Delight, that he ſhouts as the reſt do, and becomes a Frequenter of the Theatre as others: All his Reſolution did not avail, when the Temptation was brought to his Senſe.

IT is a bold and dangerous Undertaking, to court the *Opportunities* of ſinning, to invite an Enemy, to imbrace

imbrace a Danger; tho a Man do it, as he pretends, to get the Pleasure of a Victory, and to give Proof of his Piety in resisting; it is twenty to one but he is surprized, and overcome: Like the Folly, as one observes, of that *Egyptian* who acknowledged *Fire* for his *God*; and one day doing his Devotions, kissed his God after the manner of Worshippers, and burnt his Lips. Just such a Fool is he who hugs a Temptation, tho with a design of Vertue; he burns himself in the Neighbourhood of the Flame, and is like to perish in his own Folly. It is to call the Danger nearer, that we may run from it. And let Men mean never so well, they cannot act wisely, who will go to meet the World, and invite the Devil, and venture upon his Ground: They consider not, that by running upon Temptation, they have no Promise of God to be delivered out of it; and because they *Tempt* him, he

juſtly leaves them to miſcarry, as the Puniſhment of their Raſhneſs.

BEWARE therefore of trying Concluſions, how near you may approach to Sin, and not be defiled; how you adventure to gratify your Curioſity, to go where you may be enſnared, where your *Danger* is greater than your *Buſineſs*. You conſider not, that to be near Sin, is to be near the Wrath of God, and the Fire of Hell; and to come near it, is the common way of coming to it. It is the Devil's cunning to make you confident of your own Strength, to tell you you need not fear; you can run a greater Hazard than this, you can bear a ſtronger Temptation than this; What tho you are in bad Company, are you ſuch a Child that you cannot govern your ſelf? But ſince our Fleſh and corrupt Inclination is on the Tempter's ſide, our ſtrongeſt Reſolutions may then fail us: And if we make bold with the Temptations,

tations, and Occaſions of Sin, we Tempt God, and provoke him to leave us to our ſelves.

3. WHEN we run upon any ſuch thing as requires the Extraordinary Aſſiſtance of God's Grace and Spirit, without any Ground or Promiſe from the Word of God to expect it: When a Man of weak Shoulders will attempt to bear a Burden, that would require a *Sampſon*'s Back. When we will ruſh upon ſuch things, as are beyond our Ability and Strength, and expect Extraordinary Help, without a Promiſe. As when, by the neglect of the ordinary way of improving our Minds in Knowledg, we think to do thoſe things unto which the greateſt Improvements of Knowledg are required. If the Sons of *Sceva* will undertake to exerciſe the Devil, no wonder if he prevail againſt them, *Acts* 19. 16.

THE Popiſh Vows of *perpetual Virginity* are a Tempting of God and

and Chriſt in this reſpect; becauſe there is *no Promiſe* of God's Aſſiſtance, that they ſhall be able to perform ſuch a Vow: There is no Promiſe, that whoever will reſolve and endeavour it, ſhall be able to lead a ſingle Life without *Marriage*. So the Apoſtles were offended with them that would injoin Chriſtians to obſerve the Jewiſh Ceremonies, after Chriſt's Aſcenſion to Heaven: Not only becauſe they were laid aſide by the Death of Chriſt, but becauſe there was *no Promiſe* of the Divine Preſence, and Aſſiſtance any longer in that Worſhip: This therefore is called *a Tempting of God*, Acts 15. 10.

SECT. XIII.

Of Tempting God and Chriſt, as to his Patience.

Laſtly. WE Tempt him as to *his Patience* and *Long-ſuffering*. And thus the Jews are ſaid to tempt God, while they rebelled againſt him, and abuſed his Forbearance. What is termed *the Day of Temptation* in one place, is called *the Day of Provocation* in another. *You have now tempted me*, ſays God, *theſe ten times, and will not obſerve my Orders, or hearken to my Voice*; your continued Diſobedience is a conſtant Tempting of me.

TO how many of us may God ſay the like and worſe! You have tempted me, not only theſe ten

times,

times, but these *ten* Years, or *twenty* Years, or more; and would not obey my Voice, notwithstanding many Convictions of Conscience, many instructive Warnings and Reproofs, many loud Calls of Providence, and many Motions of my Spirit striving with your Hearts, *&c.* You have tempted my Patience, and Long-suffering, and made a bold Trial how long I would bear with you.

SECT.

SECT. XIV.

The Improvement of this Diſcourſe for Conviction of Sin, and Humiliation. The Aggravations of this Tempting Chriſt. The Danger of it, as applied to the Nation, from this Example of the Jews.

Firſt. THIS may be improved for our *Humiliation*, with reference to the many Inſtances, wherein we have been guilty of Tempting Chriſt. Upon a Review of the forementioned Particulars, how often may we juſtly charge our ſelves with this Sin! To affect us with it the more, I might repreſent the Evil of this Sin, partly from the Spring and Root of it, which is *Infidelity*, Unbelief, or Diſtruſt of God. *Pſal.* 78. 18, 22, 23.

They

They believed not God. Partly from the *Disobedience*, and Rebellion against the Divine Orders, with which it is attended. *They Tempted God, and provoked the Most High*, i. e. they rebelled against him.

PARTLY from that Ingratitude, and Forgetfulness of God which this Sin implies, and from the *Insolence* and *Arrogance* that is contained in such a Trial of the Knowledg, Power and Goodness of God. For a Servant, or a Scholar, or any Inferior to try Experiments concerning the Honesty, or the Skill of his Superiour, is a provoking piece of Insolence. But this is nothing to the sawcy Boldness of Rebellious Sinners against the Lord, and against his Christ. I might argue it likewise from its Likeness and Conformity to the Sin of the Devil; It is a horrid Imitation of the Devil's Crime, who is the Tempter.

I MIGHT prove it also from the Severity of its Punishment, by Scrip-

Scripture-Examples and Declarations: Theſe *Jews* are an eminent Inſtance, we read of Multitudes of them deſtroyed ſuddenly, *The Wrath of God came upon them, while the Meat was in their Mouths.* And, for another Inſtance of the like Guilt, they were deſtroyed by *Serpents:* And afterwards, for continuing to tempt God, they were excluded the promiſed Land; they were refuſed Entrance into *Canaan*, and All of that Generation, except *Caleb* and *Joſhua*, died in the Wilderneſs.

THIS Inſtance ſhould be very Inſtructive and Monitory unto us, to take heed of Tempting God, as the *Iſraelites* did. We reſemble them both in our Mercies, and in our Sins. God hath moſt eminently favour'd this Nation, and we have moſt highly provoked God.

GREAT Things indeed he did for *Iſrael:* He meant (ſaith Biſhop *Hall*) to make that Nation a *Prece-*

dent

dent of Mercy. Heaven and Earth conſpir'd to bleſs them. Should I ſpeak of the Wonders of *Egypt*, I know not whether their Preſervation in it, or Deliverance out of it were the more Miraculous. Did they want a Guide? God himſelf goes before them in Fire. Did they want a Shelter? his Cloud is ſpread over them for a Covering. Did they want a Way? the Sea it ſelf ſhall make it, and be at once a Street and a Wall to them. Did they want Bread? Heaven it ſelf ſhall pour down the Food of Angels. Did they want Meat to their Bread? the Wind ſhall bring them whole Driſts of Quails into their Tents. Do they want Drink to both? the very Rocks ſhall yield it. Do they want Sutes of Apparel in the Wilderneſs? their Clothes ſhall not wax old on their Backs. Do they want Advice? God himſelf ſhall give his Vocal Oracle between the Cherubims. Do they want a Law?

he

he ſhall come down upon *Sinai*, and deliver it in Fire, Thundring, Smoke, Earthquakes, and write it with his own Finger in Tables of Stone. Do they want Habitations? God ſhall provide them a Land that flows with Milk and Honey. Are they perſecuted? God ſtands in Fire between them and their Harms. Are they ſtung to Death? the Brazen Serpent ſhall cure them. Are they reſiſted? The Walls of *Jericho* ſhall fall down alone: Hail-ſtones brain their Enemies: The Sun ſtood ſtill, to ſee *Joſhua*'s Revenge and Victory. O Great and Mighty Things that God did for *Iſrael*!

AND if any Nation under Heaven could either parallel or ſecond *Iſrael* in the Favours of God, this poor little *Iſland* of ours is it. The Cloud of his Protection hath covered us. The bloody Sea of Perſecution hath given way to us, and we have paſſed it dry-ſhod. The true *Manna* from Heaven is rain'd down

down abundantly about our Tents. The Waters of Life ſpring forth plenteouſly among us. The better Law of the Goſpel is given us from Heaven by the Hands of his Son, *&c.*

BUT under all theſe and the like Obligations they Tempted God, and provoked the moſt High. Let us take heed of imitating their Sin, and Tempting God as they did, by not underſtanding his Wonders, by forgetting all his Works, by continuing to provoke him after ſuch National Deliverances as he has wrought for us. Are we not under the like Guilt on this Account? How ſlowly doth any thing that may be called *Reformation* go on? tho there be the Countenance of Magiſtracy to encourage it. What Inſtance of Pride and Luxury is abated? *&c.* If therefore after all God hath done, we thus continue to Tempt him by our *Impenitence*; it is poſſible, and more than poſſible, that we may

may yet be deſtroyed. Read *Gen.* 14. compared with the 18*th* Chapter, and you find that *Sodom*, and *Gomorrah*, and the Cities of the Plain, notwithſtanding the Victory and Succeſs which God had given them againſt their Enemies, by the Aſſiſtance of *Abraham* and his Servants; yet for their Pride, and Idleneſs, and Uncleanneſs, and the abuſe of their Plenty and Peace, he ſoon after deſtroyed them *with Fire from Heaven*, as a Warning to future Generations, and hath left it on Record for our Admonition.

BUT *the Jews* are our moſt remarkable *Example* and *Pattern*. How miraculouſly did God deliver them out of *Egypt!* and yet how ſoon after were they brought to their Wits end at the Red Sea! God *there* appears for them, and makes bare his Arm for their Salvation, and the Overthrow of the Enemies; but that extraordinary Deliverance at *the Red Sea* did but

enter

enter them into the *Wilderness*; they were not presently upon this, as they imagined, to take Possession of the promised Land; God would try them in the Wilderness. There they murmured, and *tempted God in the Desart*, and ever and anon he plagued them with one Instance of his Severity after another. He delivered them often, but they rebelled again, and he is forced to punish them again: Insomuch that when they were upon the very Borders of the promised Land, when they could look into *Canaan*, and needed only to go over and take Possession, *Numb.* 14. 8, 9. yet, like a Ship in sight of the Harbour, their Provocations against God raise a new Storm, and they are driven back again to Sea, and all the Passengers are drowned. *God sware in his Wrath, that none of them should enter into his Rest.*

WE have reason to apprehend, that after all that God has done for us,

if

if yet we continue to tempt him, he may refuſe to ſtrengthen that which he has wrought for us; the faireſt Hopes of NATIONAL Eſtabliſhment may be blaſted, the neareſt Proſpect of compleat Salvation may be diſappointed; God may ſtop the Progreſs of the Deliverance he has given, and leave us to periſh by one another, or as a Prey to the Common Enemy. And who can tell but this may be the laſt Trial that He will ever make of this Generation? The Seaſon ſeems to be very Critical, Judgment and Mercy are ſtriving which ſhall get the better. But if yet we rebel againſt him, deſpiſe his Goodneſs, diſobey his Orders, blaſpheme the Son of God, and reject the everlaſting Goſpel, and will not know the things that belong unto our common Peace, *&c.* If neither his late aſtoniſhing Kindneſs to us, nor the Apprehenſions of his deſerved Diſpleaſure for miſimproving it,

it, will make us ceaſe to Tempt him; but we ſtill harden our Hearts, as the *Jews* did; we have Reaſon to look for Wonders of Severity, anſwerable to thoſe of Mercy we have formerly had. We may Fear and Expect this as to *the NATION*; but however God may deal with that, yet as to particular Perſons, who continue to tempt God, *there remains nothing* for them *but a fearful looking for of Judgment, and of fiery Indignation.*

SECT.

SECT. XV.

An Exhortation to all ſorts of Perſons, inſtead of Tempting Chriſt, to make Trial and Proof of his Goodneſs and Faithfulneſs, in a way of Duty, Obedience, and Dependance.

Secondly. LET us then, inſtead of Tempting Chriſt as we have done, reſolve for the future to make that *Trial* and *Proof* of him, which he allows and requires us to do. We read ſometimes in Scripture how God condeſcended to the Weakneſs of his Servants, and gave them leave to demand *a Sign* of him, upon ſuch and ſuch Particular Occaſions. *Gideon* had an expreſs Order for his *Sign*, *Judg.* 7. And *Ahaz* had leave

to ask *one*, for the increaſe of his Faith; and it ſeems as if he did not do well to refuſe it, *Iſa.* 7. 12. But ſometimes, without an expreſs Command, holy Men have asked of God *a Sign*; as *Abraham*, Gen. 15. *Whereby ſhall I know, that I ſhall inherit the Land of* Canaan? So *Eliezer*, *Abraham*'s Servant, *Gen.* 24. 14. So *Jonathan*, 1 Sam. 14. 10. In theſe and other extraordinary Caſes, what there was of Prophetical Inſtinct, or Inſpiration to warrant them, we know not; and whether they did well or ill in demanding a Sign of God, we can hardly ſay: But our Caſe is plain, where we have the Warrant of Divine *Precept*, and a *Promiſe* alſo for our Incouragement.

LET us then make Trial of the Faithfulneſs, and the Goodneſs of God, in the ways of Obedience. *Prove me now*, ſays God, *Mal.* 1. 10. *Do any of you kindle a Fire upon mine Altar for nought?* Do you offer a

Sacrifice to me without profiting your ſelves? *Tho you have robbed me, ſaith the Lord, as to Tithes and Offerings, even this whole Nation.* Chap. 3. v. 9, 10. *Yet bring them into the Store-houſe, that there may be Meat in my Houſe; and prove me now herewith, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts; ſee if I will not open unto you the Windows of Heaven, and pour you out an abundant Bleſſing, that you ſhall not have room to receive it; and make that all Nations ſhall call you bleſſed.* To the like purpoſe we read in *Pſal.* 81. 13, 14. *O that my People had hearkened unto me, and* Iſrael *had walked in my Ways! I ſhould ſoon have ſubdued their Enemies, and turned my Hand againſt their Adverſaries.* But they would not try me, and truſt me.

GOD condeſcends to ſpeak ſuch Language unto All of us. *Prove me,* ſaith he, by obeying my Voice, and hearkening to my Word: Enter into my Service, ſee whether

I am a hard Maſter: Take my Yoke upon you, ſee whether it be not eaſy, and my Burden light: Try whether my Service be not better than that of Sin, and the World: See whether any can do for you, that which I can, and will do. Come unto me, *ſays Chriſt*, if you are *weary* and *heavy laden*, and ſee whether I cannot give you *Reſt*. Do but make *a Trial*, whether the Ways of Wiſdom be not Pleaſantneſs, and her Paths Peace. Condemn not Religion for a melancholy, tedious, burdenſome thing, before you have found it ſo upon *Trial*. See whether ſeeking the Kingdom of God, and the Righteouſneſs thereof, in *the firſt place*, be not the way, to have all other things added, in the beſt Proportion. Make a Trial, at leaſt for a time, whether to walk uprightly, and keep a Conſcience void of Offence towards God and Man, be not the only way to walk ſurely in the moſt difficult Times,

Times, and turn of Affairs, publick or private.

PROVE me now, ſays God, whether he that fears God and works Righteouſneſs ſhall not be Accepted. See whether I am a barren Wilderneſs, or a Land of Drought; whether ever you ſhall have reaſon to Repent your turning from Sin and Vanity, to walk in my Way; whether ever any ſhall be Loſers by their Fidelity to me.

O THAT Magiſtrates, Miniſters, Gentlemen, Students, Merchants, Tradeſmen, Parents, Children, Heads of Families, and Servants, younger, elder Perſons, under what Denomination ſoever they may be ranked, would *All* in their ſeveral places, inſtead of Tempting Chriſt, make a Trial of his Faithfulneſs to his Promiſes, unto ſuch as are diligent, and faithful to the performance of the Duty! O that *Magiſtrates* would but try, whether Fidelity to God, and Zeal for his Glory, and

Concern for his Honour, and Care that his Laws be observed, and the Violation of them punished; whether this be not the best way to their own Safety, Honour and Establishment, and the only Exaltation and Security of the People! O that *Ministers* would but try, whether hearty Love to God and Christ, and the Souls of Men, and fervent Desires and Endeavours to approve our selves to the All-seeing God, in seeking to promote the Faith, and Holiness, and Joy of Christians, and their Union, Love and Concord one with another, be not the best way for our Acceptance and Success!

O that *Merchants*, and *Tradesmen* would but try, by constant Dependance upon God, and daily Prayer in their Closets and Families, and strict Justice and Righteousness in their Dealings, and by chusing and encouraging such Servants as fear the Lord, and by keeping up the

Worship

Worship and Authority of God in their Houses; whether this be not the best way to banish the Curse of God from their Habitation, and to obtain that Blessing of Heaven upon their Diligence in their Callings, which will make Rich, without the Addition of Sorrow!

O that *Parents* would try, whether by dedicating their Children to God betimes, and educating them diligently in the Fear and Nurture of the Lord, and disgracing Sin to them, telling them the Evil and the Danger of it, and antidoting them against Temptation, saving them from Pride, and Idleness, and evil Company, making Religion pleasant to them, and setting an holy Example before them, *&c.* whether *this* be not the best, and only way to have Comfort in them!

O that we, who are *the Children of Religious, Holy Parents*, would but try whether there will not be a double Blessing from Heaven upon

us,

us; if we own *our Fathers God*, and *our Mothers God:* If we keep within the Bond of his Covenant, and remember his Commandments to do them; if we cut not off the Entail of Covenant-Bleſſings with our own Hands; if we obey the God of our Fathers, with a perfect and upright Heart! Let us *prove him*, and try whether he will not fulfil his Promiſe, That *the Mercy of the Lord ſhall be from everlaſting to everlaſting to them that fear him, and his Righteouſneſs (or Faithfulneſs) to the Childrens Children.*

IN SHORT, let us All reſolve to Tempt God and Chriſt no more, as we have done, but to prove him by our holy Obedience. And we ſhall find by Experience, that committing our Way to God in well-doing, is the wiſeſt, and eaſieſt, and ſweeteſt Liſe, through all the Changes of this preſent World: That by caſting our Bread upon the Waters,

Waters, and giving to the Poor, we do but lend unto the Lord, and he will surely repay it: That to sanctify the Lord's-Day, is the proper Method to have the Blessing of Heaven all the Week: That to live the Life of the Righteous, and to begin to remember and serve him in our Youth, is the only proper Method for a long Life, and a good old Age, or a peaceful Death, a Comfortable Account, and a Blessed Eternity.

FINIS.

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